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IN THE CLAIMS:

Cancel Claims 4 and 22.

Amend Claims 1 and 12 as set forth below:

1. (currently amended) A rail for use as a support in an apparatus for holding a plurality of semiconductor wafers, the rail comprising:

a plurality of teeth, each of the teeth having a top surface, a bottom surface, and a length, the teeth being arranged such that a space between the top surface of one tooth and the bottom surface of a next higher adjacent tooth forms a slot for receiving a portion of a semiconductor wafer;

a raised support structure for contacting and supporting said wafer and located on the top surface of at least some of the teeth that form a bottom of a slot, the raised support structure having opposing sidewalls that intersect with and define an upper surface between the opposing sidewalls, the upper surface being spaced from the top surface, and each raised support structure extending for at least approximately 50% of the length of a respective one of the teeth; [[and]]

on each raised support structure, a radius is formed at and extends along each intersection of each of the opposing sidewalls and the upper surface; and

the length of each tooth is between about 30 and about 100 millimeters, and the raised support structures narrow from a front edge thereof along the lengths of the teeth, such that a widest portion of each of the raised support structures is at the front edges.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) The rail of claim 1, wherein the length of each tooth is greater than 25 millimeters, and the radiused intersections include a front edge and the opposing sidewalls of the raised support structures.

4. (canceled)

5. (original) The rail of claim 1, wherein the radius is at least 1 millimeter.

6. (original) The rail of claim 1, wherein the radius is at least 1 millimeter and not greater than 2.5 millimeter.

7. (previously presented) The rail of claim 1, wherein the raised support structure extends for at least approximately 70% of the length of each tooth.

8. (previously presented) The rail of claim 1, wherein each raised support structure is a wedge-shaped protuberance running along one lateral side of the length of one of the teeth.

9. (previously presented) The rail of claim 1, wherein each raised support structure runs continuously from a front edge of one of the teeth to a point located on the tooth at least 80% of the length of the tooth from the front edge of the tooth.

10. (previously presented) The rail of claim 1, wherein the rail is composed of silicon carbide, each of the teeth are rectangular with unrounded edges, and the teeth have front edges with lateral widths that are greater than lateral widths of the raised support structures at front edges thereof.

11. (previously presented) The rail of claim 1, wherein the rail is formed as a monolithic structure including a vertical section from which all of the teeth extend horizontally, and each of the raised support structures taper to a point adjacent to the vertical section.

12. (currently amended) A wafer carrier for supporting a plurality of semiconductor wafers, the carrier comprising:

at least one generally planar plate;

at least two support rails, each support rail having a vertical axis and being mounted with its vertical axis generally normal to the plate; [[and]]

each support rail has a plurality of teeth arranged in a vertical stack, the teeth extending parallel to each other and generally parallel to a plane of the plate, each tooth having a raised support structure thereon, the raised support structure comprising an upper surface spaced above a top surface of the tooth and sidewalls connecting the upper surface to the top surface, intersections formed between the sidewalls and the upper surface, and the intersections being radiused such that the sidewalls and top surface have rounded edges that extend lengthwise with respect to the tooth; and

each support rail is formed as a monolithic structure including a vertical section from which all of the teeth extend horizontally, and each of the raised support structures taper to a point adjacent to the vertical section.

13. (canceled)

14. (previously presented) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein a length of each tooth is greater than 25 millimeters, and the radiused intersections include a front edge and the sidewalls of the raised support structures.

15. (previously presented) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein a length of each tooth is between about 30 and about 100 millimeters, and the raised support structures narrow from a front edge thereof along the lengths of the teeth, such that a widest portion of each of the raised support structures is at the front edges.

16. (original) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein the radius is at least 1 millimeter.

17. (original) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein the radius is at least 1 millimeter and not greater than 2.5 millimeter.

18. (previously presented) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein each support structure extends for at least approximately 70% of the length of each tooth.

19. (previously presented) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein each support structure is a wedge-shaped protuberance running along one lateral side of a length of one of the teeth.

20. (previously presented) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein each support structure runs continuously from a front edge of one of the teeth to a point located on the tooth at least 80% of the length of the tooth from the front edge of the tooth.

21. (previously presented) The wafer carrier of claim 12, wherein each support rail is composed of silicon carbide, each of the teeth are rectangular with unrounded edges, and the teeth have front edges with lateral widths that are greater than lateral widths of the raised support structures at front edges thereof.

22. (canceled)

Add the following new claims:

23. (new) A rail for use as a support in an apparatus for holding a plurality of semiconductor wafers, the rail comprising:

a plurality of teeth, each of the teeth having a top surface, a bottom surface, and a length, the teeth being arranged such that a space between the top surface of one tooth and the bottom surface of a next higher adjacent tooth forms a slot for receiving a portion of a semiconductor wafer;

a raised support structure for contacting and supporting said wafer and located on the top surface of at least some of the teeth that form a bottom of a slot, the raised support structure having opposing sidewalls that intersect with and define an upper surface between the opposing sidewalls, the upper surface being spaced from the top surface, and each raised support structure extending for at least approximately 50% of the length of a respective one of the teeth;

on each raised support structure, a radius is formed at and extends along each intersection of each of the opposing sidewalls and the upper surface; and

each raised support structure is a wedge-shaped protuberance running along one lateral side of the length of one of the teeth.

24. (new) The rail of claim 23, wherein the length of each tooth is greater than 25 millimeters, and the radiused intersections include a front edge and the opposing sidewalls of the raised support structures.

25. (new) The rail of claim 23, wherein the radius is at least 1 millimeter and not greater than 2.5 millimeter.

26. (new) The rail of claim 23, wherein each raised support structure runs continuously from a front edge of one of the teeth to a point located on the tooth at least 80% of the length of the tooth from the front edge of the tooth.

27. (new) The rail of claim 23, wherein the rail is composed of silicon carbide, each of the teeth are rectangular with unrounded edges, and the teeth have front edges with lateral widths that are greater than lateral widths of the raised support structures at front edges thereof.

28. (new) The rail of claim 23, wherein the rail is formed as a monolithic structure including a vertical section from which all of the teeth extend horizontally, and each of the raised support structures taper to a point adjacent to the vertical section.

29. (new) A rail for use as a support in an apparatus for holding a plurality of semiconductor wafers, the rail comprising:

a plurality of teeth, each of the teeth having a top surface, a bottom surface, and a length, the teeth being arranged such that a space between the top surface of one tooth and the bottom surface of a next higher adjacent tooth forms a slot for receiving a portion of a semiconductor wafer;

a raised support structure for contacting and supporting said wafer and located on the top surface of at least some of the teeth that form a bottom of a slot, the raised support structure having opposing sidewalls that intersect with and define an upper surface between the opposing sidewalls, the upper surface being spaced from the top surface, and each raised support structure extending for at least approximately 50% of the length of a respective one of the teeth;

on each raised support structure, a radius is formed at and extends along each intersection of each of the opposing sidewalls and the upper surface; and

the rail is composed of silicon carbide, each of the teeth are rectangular with unrounded edges, and the teeth have front edges with lateral widths that are greater than lateral widths of the raised support structures at front edges thereof.

30. (new) The rail of claim 29, wherein the length of each tooth is greater than 25 millimeters, and the radiused intersections include a front edge and the opposing sidewalls of the raised support structures.

31. (new) The rail of claim 29, wherein the radius is at least 1 millimeter and not greater than 2.5 millimeter.

32. (new) The rail of claim 29, wherein each raised support structure runs continuously from a front edge of one of the teeth to a point located on the tooth at least 80% of the length of the tooth from the front edge of the tooth.

33. (new) The rail of claim 29, wherein the rail is formed as a monolithic structure including a vertical section from which all of the teeth extend horizontally, and each of the raised support structures taper to a point adjacent to the vertical section.